



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
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July 29, 2009 – Imaginative Play A Remedy For Summer Boredom

Lori Pacchioli is an educator, parent, entrepreneur and kid at heart. Lori's *Ready, Set, Grow* preschool camps, hosted by Brookline, provided imaginative play this summer for young and old. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

There were three popular phrases that echoed through the halls of my house when I was growing up with summers off from school. Running in and out with friends through what seemed like a revolving door, the call to my mom would either be, “what’s there to eat?” “can we go to the pool?” or “he won’t give me a turn!” (*he* being any one of my three brothers).

My mom set out the bread, peanut butter, marshmallow fluff and a butter knife and taught us how to make our own fold over sandwiches. We swam several days a week at the public pool till we were blue-lipped, water-sogged and tired. And we managed somehow to negotiate the sibling spats and quarrels that popped up between ball games and bike rides.

The two words that were *never* spoken in my home were, “I’M BORED.”

There was always something to do in the house, yard or neighborhood and it was usually fuelled by imagination and supported with simple tools and props with a multitude of uses.

We painted cardboard delivery boxes with water and real house painting brushes and rollers. When the water dried, we painted again. Using a mirror turned up toward the ceiling, we walked through rooms of the house stepping *over* the door jams, pretending the wide-open spaces of the ceilings were caves waiting to be explored and navigated. (Careful to stay away from steps when doing this!)

In the afternoons my mom would let us help “hang the wash” by stringing a piece of clothesline between chairs and giving us wet washcloths, duster rags and T-shirts to wring out and hang on the line. Later – much to my mother’s temporary dissatisfaction – they would become rags for bike washing and scrubbing the front door.

Rock collecting near the local stream was not only an adventure that needed map making and sandwich packing, but became a source for later artwork. We painted rocks of all shapes and sizes and made garden people, spending hours arranging them in the shrubs and along the side of the house, crafting furniture and cars out of sticks and fishing line.

Our days were filled with the kind of play that didn’t require toys, or gadgets or much supervision. Looking back, I think we were trained to find our own fun.

As the days of summer linger on and your children are looking for something to do that is not external stimulation – camp, TV, Nintendo, think about simple props and ideas that can lead to long self-sustained play. And remember that sometimes the cry of boredom is actually a call for some companionship. Take a few

minutes with some wooden spoons and a bowl of water, crush some flower petals, add a little grass and mud if you can stand it, and make some pies.

These are the imaginative play days of summer that memories are made of. Enjoy them like a child!

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